STENCILING.

NEGLECT for many years has been the fate of Mural Painting, but the art has now again taken its original place among decorations, and Stenciling, as the easiest and most inexpensive of the various kinds of wall painting, largely practiced.

The advantages of Stenciling are, that it is an art that can be employed without a knowledge of drawing; it will cover an unsightly wall without great labor or cost, and it will bring into play the faculties of imagination and appreciation of color.

Though a mechanical art, as far as the reproduction of set patterns is concerned, it is not necessarily confined to mere copying, as the worker may, if he chooses, design his own patterns, and, even if not capable of doing that, he can color them according to his own ideas. The mere manual part of rubbing a dry color through the holes cut or "stenciled" through a sheet of tough paper is mechanical, but the arrangement of that color, so as to be artistic, raises the work to an art.

For a really successful painting, no one part of any of the various patterns should attract the eye to the exclusion of the rest; one part of a design may be brighter than another, to bring that portion forward and thus assist the design, but never so as to exclude all appreciation of the softer tints surrounding it. Neither are great varieties of pattern desirable; a building painted with half a dozen well grouped designs will look better than one upon which a complicated and incongruous medley of "stencils" have been used.

Stenciling is applied to the decoration of churches, public buildings, and private houses, and it is worked either in water or oil colors. The cost of water color Stenciling is trifling, as powder colors, size and water, are all that are used, and it can be applied much more easily and quickly than oils; therefore it is generally used in decorating those parts of a building which are not likely to be rubbed against. Its one fault is a want of durability, which is noticeable as soon as it is subject to pressure or damp from the heated atmosphere of a room—the color, not being fixed in a substance that resists water, becomes dissolved and runs away.

Oil color, though more expensive, is more durable, and will always resist atmospheric damp or pressure; it is, however, affected by internal damp, such as comes out from stone or brick not properly dried, the moisture from the wall forcing itself through the oil color and carrying the color with it in flakes. Oil colors are used after a wall has been plastered and "stopped" with a coating of glue size for the lower parts of halls, sitting-rooms, and churches, and also where the decoration is required to be brilliant in color, as deeper and richer tints are obtained by the use of oils than with water colors.

The following materials are required for water color Stenciling: Colors in powder, size, stencil brushes, stencil knife, mahlstick, T square, foot rule, earthen pots of various sizes, string and lead weight, knotting varnish, stencil patterns, and gilder's requisites. To these are added, in oil color Stenciling, linseed oil, japanner's gold size, turpentine, and patent driers. The powder colors can be obtained from an ordinary oil and color shop, but must be well and finely ground, or, when mixed, they will be lumpy.

The brushes made expressly for the work are short, thick handled, and with strong hairs cut straight at the end. A few ordinary sable brushes are necessary to work in fine parts of the patterns. The foot rule, T square, and lead are required to mark out accurately upon the wall guiding lines, either horizontal, perpendicular, or slanting before the pattern is applied, as unless these details are perfect the best design will fail.

The stencil plates or patterns are made either of thin tin or cartridge paper. The latter is the best material for an amateur; it is not so heavy to hold in the hand, and, when covered with knotting varnish, is very durable. The plates are bought ready cut out, or made as follows: Take a piece of strong cartridge paper, eighteen inches long and twelve inches wide (the width depends upon the width of the design) and upon this draw the design; leave an inch margin round it, and remember that the parts between the lines drawn are those that are to be cut away, and through which the paint is rubbed on to the wall.

Examine carefully every detail of the pattern, noting if, when cut, any part of it that should remain will become detached from want of a support, and where this occurs make what are called "tags," *i. e.*, leave thin strips of paper across the cut-out parts, so as to support the portion likely to fall out by attaching it to a solid part. Never cut out any pattern until these "tags" have been marked out, as should a portion of the design become detached, the pattern is useless.

In ecclesiastical and conventional designs these tag lines are frequently left and not painted out when the work is finished, as they convey a certain stiffness to the design that suits the intention of the work, but in ordinary patterns they are painted over after the stencil plate has been removed. If the design cannot be completed in the length of one stencil plate, continue it upon a second, which so arrange that some of the pattern upon the last part of the first plate is repeated on the first part of the second, so that all difficulty of joining the two is obviated. Prepare several plates of the same design, as they become wet after use, and require to be left for a time to dry.

To cut out the pattern: Lay it upon a sheet of glass, and cut away the parts between the lines with a stencil knife, which is a short sharp two-edged blade let into a strong handle, and then cover the cartridge paper with a coating of knotting varnish.

The wall to be Stenciled requires to be examined before commencing the work. Should it be of smooth plaster, there will be no difficulty in the matter, a brick wall covered with plaster being the best foundation for either oil or water Stenciling. Should it be of unplastered stone or brick, melt a sufficient quantity of patent size in a saucepan with twice its quantity of water and brush this over the wall for water color Stenciling, but for oil color Stenciling employ a regular workman to prepare the surface of the wall, as several coats of paint are necessary.

The white plaster is not a good ground color for any kind of painting, therefore mend with plaster of Paris any portion of it that is not smooth and then brush it over with a mixture made of a pound of glue dissolved in a gallon of hot water and thickened with red lead and patent driers. While this is drying put into a bucket three pounds of gilder's whitening, cover it with water and leave until broken up, then pour off the water and stir with a thick stick. Melt in another vessel some patent size, stain it well with a powder color of the tint the ground is to be, pour this upon the whitening and mix it well in, then strain before it is at all cold. The tint will dry rather lighter than when first mixed, therefore allow for this, and also endeavor to mix enough for the whole wall at one time, as it is difficult to match the color in a second letting. Let the mixture stand until it looks like a weak jelly and then apply it to the wall with large brushes.

Two people should put on the color, one working from the top of the wall and the other from the bottom, as the ground must be entirely covered at once, no retouching or going over being possible.

Umber, indigo, light red, black, chrome yellow, terra vert, and Indian red will make most of the ground colors used, the depth of tint being regulated by the amount of color mixed with the whitening.

The shades selected for ground colors must depend upon the use to which the building is put and the amount of light that will be thrown upon the wall. Sombre Indian reds, terra verts, and Indian yellows are the colors used in churches, while lemons, flesh tints, apple greens, sky blues, are used in drawing-rooms and public buildings; cinnamons and neutral colors in halls and passages. Large rooms will carry off depth and richness of color better than small ones, deep shades making the rooms they are used in look smaller than they are; while rooms that are highly decorated in the matters of pictures, furniture, carvings, etc., should have the ground color of their walls of subdued neutral shades, so that they are simple backgrounds to the rest of the ornamentation.

The ground color dry, mark out with the aid of the foot rule the horizontal lines on the wall in between which the pattern is to be placed, and with the lead weight and string, the perpendicular lines; for the latter cover the string with whitening, suspend it from the top of the wall in the place where a straight line is required, and the lead will keep it hanging down correctly, run the fingers down the string so that the whitening on it comes off on to the wall, or hold it by the lead and give it a sharp twang on to the wall. Prepare the paints in separate pipkins and supply a stencil brush for each color.

For water color Stenciling mix well ground powder color with patent or ordinary size; for oil colors mix powder color with japanner's gold size, turpentine, linseed oil, and some patent drier. The turpentine will deaden the glossiness of the gold size and the oil, but it should only be used sparingly, as the color must be thick, and the turpentine makes it thin. The various shades of color are made by mixing crude color with white to lighten it with black to deepen it.

The four colors most used should be indigo, Indian red, ochre, and white, and brighter tints sparingly added. These tints require to be deepened and enriched, so as to produce various shades. Thus: cobalt blue, lighten with white for sky blue, and deepen with indigo; indigo, deepen with black, lighten with white and crimson; vermilion, lighten with yellow, and deepen with Vandyke brown; Indian red, lighten with vermilion, and deepen with black; crimson, lighten with vermilion, deepen with black; green, lighten with various yellows, and deepen with black or indigo; ochre, lighten with white, deepen with red; chocolate, make with Indian red and Vandyke brown, and lighten with vermilion and deepen with black; neutral tint, make with white, Indian red, and a little indigo; gray, with black, white, and a little red; purple, with blue and carmine, in large or small quantities, and with or without white, according to the shade required; yellow, deepen with red into orange, and lighten with white; a citron yellow make by adding a little black and white to the yellow.

The colors that contrast are, yellow with purple, red with green, blue with orange, yellow orange with blue purple, blue green with red orange, yellow green with red purple; gray can be introduced into all combinations of color, and is in perfect harmony with either blue or crimson.

Take the pattern and hold it with the left hand firmly against the wall, keeping it straight and in its right place, with the aid of the lines already marked upon the wall, fill a stencil brush with the required color, which take care is thick and not inclined to run; hold the brush upright, and dab it through the cut-out part of the pattern which that particular color is intended to fill. Hold the stencil plate quite close to the wall all the time, so that there is no chance of the color running beyond the holes in the pattern. Color through all the holes in this manner, then remove the stencil plate and carefully wipe it dry, put it on one side, take up another plate, fit this, as to the pattern, into the preceding lines, paint as before, and continue until the work is finished.

The paint, if properly mixed, will not run at all, but will lie upon the ground color with sharp outlines and in firm masses. Gild over with gold leaf any part of the design that requires enriching, and put a narrow band of dark paint round all parts that are gilded. Take the small brushes and paint over the "tags" or any parts of the design not perfect, but never attempt any shading, as the character of the work will be entirely spoilt if shading is introduced.

Sometimes a very minute pattern has to be executed in oil colors of many shades. To obviate any chance of these shades running together and becoming confused, place the stencil pattern on the wall, and instead of brushing the paint through, outline every part of the design through the openings on to the wall with a chalk pencil; then remove the plate and paint in the various parts with a painter's small brush.

Small separate devices, such as rounds, diamonds, fleurs-de-lis, crosses, and church roses, are frequently added to a border, after it has been painted on the wall, to enlarge and beautify it. These devices are cut out separately and applied at the worker's discretion. Straight and broad horizontal lines always mark out the lower and upper parts of set borders; these are cut on separate stencil plates to the larger patterns.

When the work is completed for the day, wash the water color stencil brushes in water, but leave the oil color brushes to soak in oil, and when the painting is finished wash them first in turpentine and then with soap and water.

TO BLACK LACQUER ON BRASS, copper turnings are dissolved in nitric acid until the latter is saturated; the objects are immersed in the solution, cleaned, and then heated moderately over a charcoal fire. This process must be repeated in order to produce a black color, as the first trial only gives a dark green. Finally polish with olive oil.

TO GIVE BRASS THE APPEARANCE OF GOLD.—Wash the brass work with rock alum, dissolved by boiling in strong lye, in the proportion of one ounce of alum to one pint of lye. When application is dry, rub with fine Tripoli.